

## Report Cautions against Poultry Pets: Mail-Order Hatcheries Linked to Salmonella Outbreak

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During Easter time, live and sometimes dyed chicks are given to children as presents. But an article published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* online reveals mail-order hatcheries are linked to over 300 cases of salmonella since 2004. (Source: Screenshot via [YouTube](#) <sup>[1]</sup>)

Each year, millions of live poultry are shipped nationwide to supply a growing backyard farming culture, represented by everyday Americans who want fresh eggs and meat on the table. Come spring, many families also buy chicks as [Easter gifts](#) <sup>[2]</sup> for children from the same mail-order hatcheries. However, a multi-state report is a harsh reminder that animal care should never be taken on lightly. A *New England Journal of Medicine* [article](#) <sup>[3]</sup> reveals that live poultry from mail-order hatcheries can be linked to hundreds of cases of salmonella from 2004 to 2011.

During the seven-year period, 316 people across 43 states got sick during an outbreak of the disease. Many patients were children.

“Most people can tell you that chicken meat may have salmonella on it,” Casey Barton Behravesh, of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and one of the authors of the

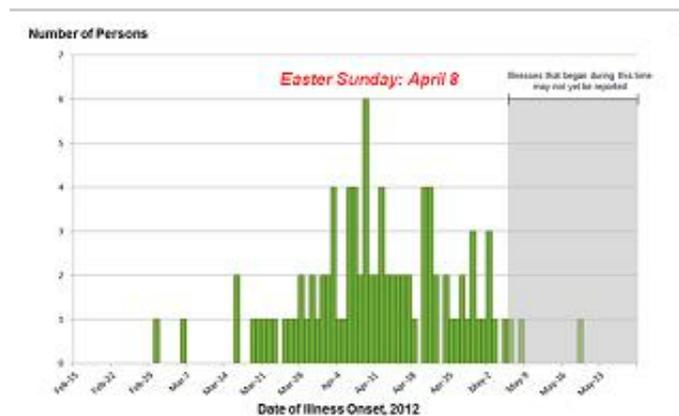
article, [told the Associated Press](#) [4]. “But surprisingly, we found many people are not aware that live chicks and chickens can spread salmonella to people.”

Over 80 percent of the cases were traced to a mail-order hatchery in the western United States. While the report doesn't specify whether the hatchery sells to customers as children's Easter gifts, 77 percent of patients who were interviewed about their contact with live young poultry reported having such contact. And so far in 2012, the majority of salmonella cases identified by the CDC occurred in spring, around Easter time. This spike in cases may be due, at least in part, to poultry's seasonal breeding, but the number of cases the weeks before and after Easter is troubling. Between March 19 and April 18, at least one case was reported each day. (See chart below)

Animal rights advocates are against giving chicks as Easter gifts because many who purchase poultry pets around that time think of them as novelties. The chicks are often abandoned, killed, or die from improper care. But Stephen Zawistowski, science advisor for the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, adds that disease should also be a deterrent.

“There are problems with salmonella with kids,” Zawistowski says. Indeed, the median age of those identified in the report was four.

“They will pick up the chicks that have been standing in waste and will touch the feces,” Zawistowski adds.



The number of salmonella cases in the United States as identified by the CDC in 2012. (Source: [CDC](#) [5])

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var gaJsHost = (("https:" == document.location.protocol) ? "https://ssl." : "http://www.");
document.write(unescape("%3Cscript src=" + gaJsHost + "google-analytics.com/ga.js"
type='text/javascript'%3E%3C/script%3E")); var pageTracker = _gat._getTracker("UA-
6149536-1"); pageTracker._trackPageview();
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[2] <http://audm.ag/EasterChicks>

[3] <http://www.nejm.org/doi/pdf/10.1056/NEJMoa1111818>

[4] [http://hosted2.ap.org/OREUG/f7ded15e4d4846268a17b79c1c4b7cb8/Article\\_2012-05-30-US-MED-Salmonella-Chicks/id-df2e3f093b76465fa3d1373b4949f3a4](http://hosted2.ap.org/OREUG/f7ded15e4d4846268a17b79c1c4b7cb8/Article_2012-05-30-US-MED-Salmonella-Chicks/id-df2e3f093b76465fa3d1373b4949f3a4)

[5] <http://www.cdc.gov/salmonella/images/maps/live-poultry-05-12/053012-epi.jpg>